United Nations A/63/PV.105

General Assembly

Sixty-third session

Official Records

105th plenary meeting
Monday, 14 September 2009, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann ..... (Nicaragua)

The meeting was called to order at 10.50 a.m.

Agenda item 12

Prevention of armed conflict

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Members will recall that, at its 2nd plenary meeting, held on 19 September 2008, the Assembly decided to include this item in the agenda of the sixty-third session.

It is my understanding that it would be desirable to defer the consideration of this item to the sixty-fourth session. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to defer the consideration of this item and to include it in the draft agenda of its sixty-fourth session?

It was so decided.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly has thus concluded its consideration of agenda item 12.

Agenda items 21 to 26

Question of Cyprus

Armed aggression against the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Question of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas)

The situation of democracy and human rights in Haiti

Armed Israeli aggression against the Iraqi nuclear installations and its grave consequences for the established international system concerning the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and international peace and security

Consequences of the Iraqi occupation of and aggression against Kuwait

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Members will recall that, at its 2nd plenary meeting, held on 19 September 2008, the Assembly decided to include agenda items 21 to 26 in the agenda of the sixty-third session, in accordance with paragraph 4 (b) of the annex to its resolution 58/316, of 1 July 2004. In that resolution, the General Assembly decided that those items shall remain on the agenda for consideration upon notification by a Member State. Accordingly, those items have been included in the draft agenda of the sixty-fourth session.

The Assembly has thus concluded its consideration of agenda items 21 to 26.

Agenda items 44 and 107 (*continued*)

Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

09-51026 (E)

Please recycle

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

Draft resolutions (A/63/L.80/Rev.1 and A/63/L.99)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Before we proceed, I should like to inform members that draft resolution A/63/L.99 has been withdrawn by the sponsors. Members will recall that the General Assembly held the debate on agenda item 44 jointly with agenda item 40 at the 36th plenary meeting, held on 3 November, as well as jointly with agenda items 107 and 112 at the 51st plenary meeting, held on 17 November 2008. Members will also recall that the Assembly adopted two resolutions under agenda item 44 — resolution 63/9 and resolution 63/199 — on 3 November and 19 December 2008, respectively, and four resolutions under agenda item 107: resolutions 63/23, 63/142, 63/235 and 63/281 on 17 November, 11 and 22 December 2008 and 3 June 2009, respectively. Also, at its 95th plenary meeting, held on 9 July 2009, the Assembly adopted resolution 63/76, under both items.

I now give the floor to the representative of Guatemala to introduce draft resolution A/63/L.80/Rev.1.

Mr. Rosenthal (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for having organized a debate that, four years later, is beginning to follow up on the mandate given to us by our heads of State in 2005 in the Outcome Document (resolution 60/1) of the Summit held that year, specifically in paragraph 189.

On behalf of 66 delegations, we have put forth a brief procedural draft resolution that attempts to affirm three issues: first, that we received the report (A/63/677) of the Secretary-General; secondly, that we held a very productive debate; and, thirdly, that we wish to continue the debate.

I have been asked to read out the list of co-sponsors, which I shall now do. They are Andorra, Australia, Austria, Denmark, Greece, Guinea, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Madagascar, Malta, Norway, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Portugal, Saint Lucia, Singapore, Slovakia, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, and my own country, Guatemala.

I would also like to note that we have held broad consultations. With a view to ensuring that the draft resolution is adopted by consensus, the sponsors have asked me to introduce an oral revision, namely, that the expression "with appreciation" be omitted from paragraph 1.

We hereby submit the draft resolution, as orally revised, for consideration by this plenary meeting of the General Assembly. We trust that it will enjoy consensus support.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now proceed to take a decision on draft resolution A/63/L.80/Rev.1, entitled "The responsibility to protect", as orally revised. May I take it that the General Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/63/L.80/Rev.1, as orally revised?

Draft resolution A/63/L.80/Rev.1, as orally revised, was adopted (resolution 63/308).

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Several speakers have asked for the floor in explanation of position following the adoption of the resolution. Before giving the floor to speakers, may I remind delegations that explanations are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Valero Briceño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela requests that this statement be fully included in the official records of this meeting. We also request that a footnote be included in the resolution to refer to the symbol of the corresponding record.

As this is the last meeting of the sixty-third session of the General Assembly, as well as the last of Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann's term as President of this body, our delegation would like to acknowledge the very efficient manner in which he has conducted the business of this principal organ of the United Nations. Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann's respectful relations with every Member country of the Organization, his full respect for the norms of the Charter of the United Nations, his intellectual acumen, his humanistic wisdom, his ethics, and his daring, honesty, transparency, generosity and sensitivity in the conduct of the work of the Assembly have earned him a very special place among those who have held the responsibility of leading the Assembly.

The General Assembly wisely decided to hold an interactive debate that included the participation of well-known intellectuals. Some of them, basing their

arguments on irrefutable historical events connected to imperial intervention against countries defending their sovereignty, warned of and condemned the sophisticated intervention mechanism that some are trying to develop under the concept of the responsibility to protect. President Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann proposed to the General Assembly four points of reference to be used as indicators in evaluating factors to determine whether the concept is genuinely applicable. Without a doubt, the document is valuable as a reference for future debates. As our heads of State have decided, the Assembly has sole responsibility for this issue. That responsibility has not been conferred upon any other organ.

We would like to reiterate the statement we delivered on this issue on behalf of my country on 24 July 2008. In that statement, we reiterated the position taken by President Hugo Chávez Frías at the 2005 Summit. At the Summit, our President raised two irrefutably relevant questions: Who will be doing the protecting and how will they protect? Those are questions that the General Assembly is certainly far from clarifying. To the contrary, the proposals that some have put forward have borne out Venezuela's concerns.

Our country's democratic institutions are fully geared towards overcoming the obstacles threatening the lives and dignity of human beings. Likewise, they demand unlimited respect for the dignity of all the world's peoples, as well as for the observance of full human rights for all. It is therefore essential to prevent a recurrence of the horrendous crimes committed against defenceless peoples. We join our voice to the call concerning Rwanda: Never again! However, what is to be said about the heinous crimes being perpetrated daily against the Palestinian people? The most enthusiastic defenders of the responsibility to protect do not consider the systematic massacres against the peoples of Palestine, Iraq and Afghanistan to be a crime.

We have pointed out that were this idea to be instituted, it would be absolutely necessary to convene a conference to amend the Charter of the United Nations in order to reconfigure the Security Council and strengthen the General Assembly. However, the debates that have taken place in the General Assembly on these issues have yielded meagre results. Some have defended the status and prerogatives they conferred upon themselves in a historical context that is completely different from today's environment. It is anti-democratic on the part of some permanent members of the Security Council to continue to impose themselves on the Secretary-General against the supreme will of the General Assembly. The emphatic refusal to eliminate the veto, which has been used indiscriminately to protect their interests and specifically not to defend international peace and security, confirms our fears. Exploiting the vague concept of the responsibility to protect, they seek to implement a new and sophisticated means for intervention.

History has a lesson to teach us. When some have set up obstacles to the exercise of sovereignty, the countries of the South have had to surrender not only their territorial integrity, but also effective control over their national resources. Nations have been broken up. Populations, once citizens of their countries of origin, have joined the hoards of refugees and displaced persons. If we truly wish to develop in good faith a collective mechanism to prevent grave crimes against humanity, we need to substantively revise the Charter of the United Nations in terms put forward by a qualified majority of the General Assembly.

Finally, it is important to indicate that, in paragraph 1 of the resolution under discussion, reference is made to the word "report". Our delegation believes that this term should be interpreted as a written statement in accordance with the established rules of the General Assembly.

Mr. Benítez Versón (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, may I most warmly congratulate you, Sir, and express Cuba's gratitude for the outstanding way in which you have presided over the sixty-third session of the General Assembly, which concludes today. You have been the kind of special President that today's world requires, and Cuba will always remember you.

When Cuba was first contacted, we informed the sponsors that, in all frankness, we were not convinced of the necessity of adopting a draft resolution on the responsibility to protect at this time, when the discussion of the issue in the General Assembly has scarcely begun. However, the Cuban delegation, acting with flexibility and in a constructive spirit, demonstrated its willingness to work to achieve an acceptable text, provided that it would be a strictly procedural resolution that did not reopen a substantive discussion and in no way prejudice the basic positions

of any State with regard to future consideration of this item.

We are pleased that the proposals put forward by Cuba have been duly taken into account by the sponsors, and have thus been able to support the revised text introduced a few minutes ago by the Ambassador of Guatemala. At the same time, we wish to place on record that, in Cuba's view, the text should have included an explicit reference to the document on the issue submitted by you, Mr. President, which had the merit of launching the debate on this item in this organ.

We are aware of the good intentions that have inspired various States to promote the establishment of the responsibility to protect as a norm of international law. At the same time, the many legitimate concerns to which the issue gives rise cannot be ignored. There is a real danger that the concept of the responsibility to protect may end up being manipulated by covert interventionists to justify, in different ways, interference and the use of force.

We are not calling on the international community and the United Nations to look on impassively and idly at genocide and other crimes. Quite the opposite — within the United Nations and outside, Cuba has always been and will always be a staunch defender of the need to address urgently the serious problems afflicting millions of human beings throughout the world. We are of the belief that this will be possible only through the establishment of an international order based on solidarity, social justice, equity and respect for the rights of peoples and every individual human being.

History eloquently demonstrates that peace, stability and development cannot be imposed by force or by war, and that military operations never lead to lasting solutions. The principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of States must be defended because, without them, the United Nations cannot continue to exist, and poor and weak nations will be abandoned to the mercies of the powerful and strong.

Cuba is and will remain resolutely opposed to any forcible action that is not consonant with the provisions of the Charter because such action can in no way be justified. The current international order, which is unjust and profoundly unequal, cannot be replaced by an even more primitive order based on a reinterpretation of the Charter and international law.

Some seek to put the concept of the responsibility to protect into practice even before it is clearly defined. Cuba is opposed to any such attempt. The truth is that there is as yet no clear definition of the responsibility to protect that is accepted by all. We underscore that the resolution adopted today is solely procedural in nature and can in no way be interpreted as being the result of an agreement reached by this Assembly on the scope and implications of the concept of the responsibility to protect, much less on specific policies to implement it.

The debate held by the General Assembly in July clearly revealed the differences among positions. A long road still has to be travelled with regard to this issue. The resolution adopted today establishes the fact that future discussions will be held in the framework of the General Assembly. We hope that other organs of the system, including the Security Council, will respect the letter and spirit of the resolution and refrain from acting on their own. Prudence and transparency must prevail in this process. Any attempt to impose decisions that fail to take duly into account the legitimate concerns of each and every delegation must be firmly rejected. Only in this way can we achieve agreements acceptable to all.

Mr. Adi (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation wishes to speak concerning resolution 63/308, entitled "The responsibility to protect". My delegation thanks the sponsors of the resolution for their efforts to promote and ensure its adoption and for taking into consideration the suggestions made by delegations in the course of its drafting.

My delegation has a good deal to say concerning the report of the Secretary-General referred to in the resolution (A/63/677), and in particular to its failure to refer to the need for due protection for populations under foreign occupation. We also believe that the issue of the responsibility to protect still needs to be considered transparently and in depth.

Despite the foregoing, my delegation joined in the consensus adoption of the resolution on the responsibility to protect.

Mr. Loayza Barea (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): We take the floor in this

plenary meeting to affirm the commitment of the Plurinational State of Bolivia to the responsibility to protect. The prevention of and protection against genocide, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing are not mere words, but also clear principles for ensuring against impunity for their perpetrators.

Resolution 63/308, which has just been adopted, addresses some of the expectations that Bolivia considered necessary to strengthen the procedural nature of the text. We wish to state once again that it is important to reiterate the obligation of States to protect their citizens and ensure their survival. Our principal goal should be to achieve that. That obligation also entails the responsibility to preserve our resources, without which we cannot survive and the overexploitation of which threatens the very survival of the human race.

Exercising that obligation is fundamental to ensuring stable internal policies, an essential foundation of our economic and social development that guarantees the full exercise of the rights of our populations, from whose sovereign mandate, and not from that of external bodies, this irrevocable responsibility arises. Contrarily, failure to exercise that obligation would establish a conditional right whereby a State, if it does not wish to protect or is unable to do so, would lose the right to invoke the principle of sovereignty as an argument against international interventions, including on various justifications, that could result in the use of force.

It is necessary to overcome the lack of international commitment and, in particular, to consider in greater depth the root causes of such potential situations, which may also promote the emergence of international mercenary groups that fan conflicts as a pretext for intervention in the guise of the right to protect. Such conflicts would be taken as unilaterally justification of the supposed right to intervene, which represents a neocolonial threat to the poorest and most vulnerable countries.

We reiterate that the General Assembly is the most representative organ of the entire international community, and should therefore serve as the catalyst for the adoption, under its jurisdiction, of measures underpinning action by the Secretary-General once the concept and legal basis that legitimize such action are fully defined. That is integral to the explicitly mandated preparation of future documents and consideration of the issue, which must not overlook vital realities that have not been duly addressed.

Recognition of the importance of the responsibility to protect remains limited. The concept is inherently controversial. A definition is necessary, and we must therefore continue to ask the questions that will enable us to define its true scope once and for all. The document before us addresses many sensitive areas, but clearly reveals the ground that we still have to cover. It would have been useful to acknowledge that in the resolution just adopted.

Lastly, on behalf of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, allow me, Mr. President, to commend you on the humanity with which you have presided over the sixty-third session of the General Assembly.

Mr. Ajawin (Sudan): At the outset, allow me to convey my country's warm greetings to you, Mr. President, as we come to the close of this sixty-third session of the General Assembly. We wish you all the best in your future endeavours.

That said, although the issue of the responsibility to protect (R2P) has generated some interesting intellectual debates, it was to be expected that there would be much controversy regarding its implications and practicality as an instrument of international law.

First, there is a tendency to misinterpret the notion of the responsibility to protect to mean the right of intervention in the affairs of sovereign States. Secondly, there has been the contention — which is true to some extent — that the definition of the responsibility to protect has already was finalized in the 2005 World Summit Outcome (resolution 60/1) and that there is no room for interpretation or negotiation. That could be true in that there is worldwide consensus that the Summit reaffirmed the role of the State in protecting its citizens against humanitarian crimes. However, there is still no consensus as to the applicability of R2P to political realities. It is precisely those misinterpretations that cause the majority of countries to be apprehensive and cautious about the debate surrounding the idea of the responsibility to protect.

My delegation strongly believes in the notion of non-interference, as articulated in Article 2 of the Charter of the United Nations, which states that "[a]ll Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial

integrity or political independence of any State". That Article is very much in the spirit of the Peace of Westphalia, which emphasized that international relations must be based on mutual respect and that every State shall refrain from interfering in the affairs of other States.

The doctrine of non-interference has, we believe, governed the politics of international relations and made people work collectively for international security, culminating in the creation of the United Nations. It is only when that cardinal principle of non-intervention is violated that international peace and security are threatened.

In conclusion, we believe that the reopening of the issue of R2P is just a procedural matter. Much time is needed for a detailed analysis of this doctrine if it is to move from the phase of the hypothetical to becoming a theory, let alone a norm in international law.

Mr. Al Habib (Islamic Republic of Iran): The Islamic Republic of Iran joined the consensus adoption of resolution 63/308, as amended by the Permanent Representative of Guatemala, as a procedural resolution merely mandating continued consideration of the notion of the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. That is evidently without any prejudice to our principled position concerning the notion and its implications.

The Islamic Republic of Iran fully shares the sentiment that the international community must be vigilant in the future in preventing the recurrence of the horrors of the mass killings and genocide of the past. However, we doubt that this could be achieved by introducing loose concepts under different names that might erode the recognized principles of the Charter of the United Nations and pave the way for all manner of intervention in the affairs of sovereign States. After all, the inaction on the part of the United Nations in the face of grave mass atrocities over the past decade was not the result of an absence of concepts or of a normative framework. It was rather a consequence of the failure of the Security Council to act when action was needed.

My delegation believes that we are still far from a consensus understanding on the R2P concept, let alone the emergence of any authoritative norm in that area. The General Assembly is the competent organ of the United Nations to continue the debate on this concept and to address the concerns and questions of many delegations concerning the concept and its implications.

The Islamic Republic of Iran believes that the notion of the responsibility to protect needs to be further discussed, clearly defined and refined in order to prevent it from being abused and misused against the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of States. I would like here to recall the concept note (A/63/958) distributed by the President of the General Assembly on the occasion of the thematic debate on the responsibility to protect held in July.

My delegation could not approve any document that contained elements which could undermine the lofty principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. My delegation expresses its reservations on the first part of operative paragraph 1 of document A/63/L.80/Rev.1.

In conclusion, we stand committed to remain engaged in further consideration within this body of the notion of the responsibility to protect and its implications.

Ms. Espinosa (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the delegation of Guatemala for its flexibility in meeting the concerns of a number of Member States on the content of resolution 63/308, which we have just adopted. Ecuador therefore joined consensus on the adoption of the text, because my country attaches great importance to the role of the United Nations, and in particular of the General Assembly, in the establishment of a world order based on respect for international law, the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter, human rights and international humanitarian law.

It is undeniable that paragraph 139 of the 2005 World Summit Outcome (resolution 60/1) refers to the need for the General Assembly to continue consideration of this matter, but in the view of my delegation the elements and guidelines set out in the report that the Secretary-General introduced to the General Assembly in July (A/63/677) do not meet all the concerns and questions of a number of Member States regarding the implementation and implications of the responsibility to protect. Those concerns and questions, Mr. President, were clearly stated during the thematic debate that you convened.

We believe that full consideration should be given to the outcome of that debate in future discussion of this matter. We believe too that this subject should be addressed in the sole United Nations deliberative forum — the General Assembly — within parameters defined by Member States.

This matter thus requires comprehensive, careful and lengthy consideration that must reflect the position of each and every Member State. Hence, we consider this resolution to be solely procedural in nature.

I do not wish to conclude, Sir, without thanking you for your invaluable contribution during your presidency to the strengthening of multilateralism and the role of the General Assembly and thus to building a fairer, more inclusive and more humane world.

Ms. Rubiales de Chamorro (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): Resolution 63/308, which has just been adopted, was the subject of consultations, during which my delegation proposed a number of changes, the majority of which were taken into account. We therefore decided to join the consensus, on the understanding that this is a solely procedural resolution and that we have barely begun the debate on this item. The debate must be transparent, open and inclusive.

My delegation believes that the concept of the responsibility to protect must be understood as the duty of each State to watch over the security of its citizens by ensuring the rights to life, food, education and health care and respect for human rights.

But we are concerned that some wish to construe this concept differently. The delegation of Nicaragua reaffirms the principles of the United Nations Charter, which is the most important and most universal instrument at our disposal. The development of the concept of the responsibility to protect must be considered as carefully as possible, as there are shortcomings in the text of the 2005 World Summit Outcome (resolution 60/1) and in the report of the Secretary-General (A/63/677) and could easily turn this concept into a right to intervene, something from which we small countries have suffered on a number of occasions.

This is an ambiguous concept that can easily be manipulated. It is set out in a General Assembly resolution whose legal value, in accordance with Article 10 of the Charter, is that of a recommendation. The concept encompasses the possibility of the use of force and could run counter to well-established principles of the Charter, such as non-interference in the internal affairs of States and non-use of force in international relations.

We thank you, Mr. President, for the concept note circulated as document A/63/958, which very clearly sets forth the elements that my country believes should be taken into account in this debate. We would have liked to see a reference to that document in the resolution we have just adopted.

As we come to the end of the sixty-third session, I pay tribute to you, Father Miguel, on behalf of my country, President Ortega and the Nicaraguan delegation, and on my own account for your excellent work over the past year. Yours has been a presidency of the South. It has been the most tangible proof that true revitalization of the General Assembly — that is, of the G-192, as you have dubbed it and as we shall call it in your honour — is possible and necessary. Indeed, it is more necessary now than ever before. Under your leadership, we have taken firm steps towards the establishment of a General Assembly in which the voice of the voiceless can be heard and in which we are all equal. You have taught us that we all have the same rights.

Mr. Gasana (Rwanda): My delegation welcomes the adoption of resolution 63/308, entitled "The responsibility to protect". Allow me to express our sincere appreciation to the delegation of Guatemala and to all sponsors of the resolution for bringing forward this item, which is of pivotal importance in preventing the four crimes articulated in the Secretary-General's excellent report on the responsibility to protect (A/63/677). My delegation welcomes the General Assembly's continued consideration of the responsibility to protect in order to ensure the implementation of the mandates set out in paragraphs 138 and 139 of the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document (resolution 60/1).

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker in explanation of position.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 44?

It was so decided.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 107.

Agenda item 48 (*continued*)

Follow-up to and implementation of the outcome of the 2002 International Conference on Financing for Development and the preparation of the 2008 Review Conference

Draft decision (A/63/L.102)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now take action on draft decision A/63/L.102, entitled "High-level Dialogue of the General Assembly on Financing for Development". May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt the draft decision?

Draft decision A/63/L.102 was adopted.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 48?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 111 (*continued*)

Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters

Report of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council (A/63/47)

Draft decision (A/63/47, para. 17)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Members will recall that the General Assembly held a joint debate on agenda items 9 and 111 at its 53rd to 56th plenary meetings, on 18 to 20 November 2008. Members will also recall that, pursuant to General Assembly decision 62/557 of 15 September 2008, the Assembly conducted intergovernmental negotiations in informal plenary meetings during its sixty-third session.

The Assembly will now take action on the draft decision contained in paragraph 17 of the report of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council (A/63/47). May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt the draft decision?

The draft decision was adopted.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): As noted earlier, intergovernmental negotiations have been conducted in full compliance with General Assembly decision 62/557 of 15 September 2008, which are still ongoing. May I therefore take it that the General Assembly decides to immediately continue intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform in informal plenary of the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session as mandated by General Assembly decision 62/557, building on the progress achieved during its sixty-third session, as well as the positions of and proposals made by Member States, while noting with appreciation the initiative and efforts of the President of the General Assembly and the Chairman in the process of comprehensive reform of the Security Council?

It was so decided.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to express my sincerest thanks to Ambassador Zahir Tanin of Afghanistan for having conducted, on my behalf, the intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform and for having done so with impartiality towards all positions in order to move ahead. Many aspects of Ambassador Tanin's invaluable endeavours are reflected in my note contained in document A/63/960. I urge Member States to endorse his work in order to turn the significant progress made at the sixty-third session to practical benefit at the sixty-fourth session. We cannot put off to the future the task of creating a better Council if we wish to ensure a better tomorrow.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 111?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 115

Follow-up to the recommendations on the administrative and internal oversight of the Independent Inquiry Committee into the United Nations Oil-for-Food Programme

The President: Members will recall that, at its 2nd plenary meeting on 19 September 2008, the General Assembly decided to include this item in the

agenda of the sixty-third session. It is my understanding that it would be desirable to defer consideration of this item and to include it in the draft agenda of the sixty-fourth session of the Assembly. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to defer consideration of this item and to include in the draft agenda of the sixty-fourth session?

It was so decided.

The President: The Assembly has thus concluded its consideration of agenda 115.

Agenda item 137

Financing of the United Nations Mission in East Timor

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Members will recall that, at its 2nd plenary meeting on 19 September 2008, the Assembly decided to include item 137 in the agenda of the sixty-third session.

It is my understanding that it would be desirable to defer consideration of this item to the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to defer consideration of this item and to include it in the draft agenda of its sixty-fourth session?

It was so decided.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly has thus concluded its consideration of agenda item 137.

Agenda item 152

Observer status for the Agency for International Trade Information and Cooperation in the General Assembly

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Members will recall that, at its 2nd plenary meeting on 19 September 2008, the Assembly decided to include item 152 in the agenda of the sixty-third session.

It is my understanding that the sponsor of this item later requested that no action should be taken on this item at the sixty-third session.

The Assembly has thus concluded its consideration of agenda item 152.

Agenda item 158

The scope and application of the principle of universal jurisdiction

Draft decision (A/63/L.100)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the United Republic of Tanzania to introduce draft decision A/63/L.100.

Mr. Mahiga (United Republic of Tanzania): I have the honour, on behalf of the African Group, to introduce draft decision A/63/L.100. The request for the inclusion of this agenda item is brought before the United Nations following the decision of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union to refer the issue of the principle of universal jurisdiction for discussion by the General Assembly. This decision of the Assembly was a result of a thorough study undertaken by the African Union Commission.

Universal jurisdiction is a well-established principle of international law the purpose of which is to ensure that individuals who commit grave offences, such as piracy, slavery, torture, genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, do not do so with impunity and are brought to justice, irrespective of the place where the offence was committed or of the nationalities of the offenders or the victims. No place should be a safe haven for war criminals and violators of international human rights and humanitarian law. This principle should therefore be impartially and objectively applied, upon the exhaustion of all local remedies, so that it may not be misused for the political ends of some individuals or countries. For this reason, the principle of universal jurisdiction must be applied in a manner that promotes international order and security and minimizes potentials for misuse.

The African States fully subscribe to and support this principle, as enshrined in article 4 (h) of the Constitutive Act of the African Union and as emphasized in several African Union decisions.

The African Group emphasizes that the controversy surrounding the concept of universal jurisdiction is not about whether the concept validly exists, but rather about the scope of its applicability. Many African States have expressed approval of the principle of universal jurisdiction on a treaty basis. However, the scope and applicability of the principle of universal jurisdiction outside the context of such treaties remain

to be determined. The extent of application of this important principle has never been substantively discussed at the level of the General Assembly. It is in this context that African States urge the General Assembly to include this item on the agenda of the sixty-fourth session for further discussion and to reach agreement on the extent and applicability of the principle that would create uniformity in its application by our domestic courts, and further to ensure that the doctrine is applied as justly as possible by all States without limitation.

In conclusion, there is a need for the international community to come up with clear rules and approaches that could be taken into consideration in guiding the application of the principle of universal jurisdiction and to provide a uniform set of regulations that would guide our national courts in meeting the challenges of prosecuting perpetrators of international human rights. There is also a need to clarify in international law the rights and obligations of States under this important principle in order to minimize potentials for misuse and to maximize the benefits of extraterritorial jurisdiction.

The African Group has taken into consideration the concerns of other delegations and has exercised great flexibility in coming up with a title and the proposed decision to be adopted today. We thank all the delegations that have worked constructively to arrive at this consensus decision. By the decision before us, the General Assembly would include the item entitled "Scope and application of the principle of universal jurisdiction" in the agenda of its sixty-fourth session for further consideration.

With these words, I am pleased to commend draft decision A/63/L.100 for adoption by this Assembly.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): We shall now proceed to take action on draft decision A/63/L.100. May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt the draft decision?

Draft decision A/63/L.100 was adopted.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in explanation of position on the decision just adopted. May I remind delegations that explanations of position are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Gasana (Rwanda): My delegation welcomes the inclusion in the agenda of the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly of the item entitled "Scope and application of the principle of universal jurisdiction". Let me also express my delegation's sincere appreciation to the African Group and, in particular, to the delegation of the United Republic of Tanzania, for their diligent efforts in bringing this item before the General Assembly.

As was unequivocally stated by the Permanent Representative of Tanzania, the African Group of States fully subscribes to the principle of universal jurisdiction as enshrined in international law. This otherwise noble principle has, however, been left open to abuse and used to serve narrow and often misguided political interests, as in the case of my own country, Rwanda. Such misapplication, in the view of my delegation, endangers and undermines the very principles of universal jurisdiction and international law. It is therefore imperative that a clear universal mechanism be established to ensure the impartial and appropriate application of the principle of universal jurisdiction.

My delegation remains committed to contributing to the consideration of this item.

Mr. Lundkvist (Sweden): I have taken the floor on behalf of the European Union to explain our position following the adoption of the decision to include in the agenda of the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly the item entitled "Scope and application of the principle of universal jurisdiction", with the recommendation that it be considered in the Sixth Committee at that session.

With regard to the inclusion of this item in the agenda of the sixty-fourth session, the European Union believes that the discussion about universal jurisdiction is, first and foremost, a legal subject that rightly belongs in the Sixth Committee. We therefore look forward to discussing the item in the Sixth Committee during the coming session.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker in explanation of position.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 158?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 18

The situation in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Members will recall that, at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 19 September

2008, the Assembly decided to include this item in the agenda of the sixty-third session.

It is my understanding that it would be desirable to defer consideration of this item to the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly. May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to defer consideration of this item and to include it in the draft agenda of its sixty-fourth session?

It was so decided.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I call on the representative of Armenia.

Mr. Nazarian (Armenia): My delegation would like to make a brief statement. As has been the case in previous sessions, this year, once again, the delegation of Armenia disassociates itself from the consensus on the decision to defer consideration of agenda item 18 to the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly. I request that this statement be included in the record of this meeting.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly has thus concluded its consideration of agenda item 18.

Agenda items remaining for consideration during the sixty-third session of the General Assembly

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to remind delegations that the following agenda items, on which action has been taken at previous meetings, have remained open for consideration during the sixty-third session of the General Assembly: items 9, 14 to 16, 20, 40, 45, 49 (d), 59, 65 (b), 71, 79, 89, 99, 100, 103 (c), 104 (a), 105 (d), 106, 112, 114 (h), (p), (q) and (u), 116 (a) to (q), 117 to 136, 138 to 149, 154 and 157.

As members are aware, those items have been included in the provisional agenda of the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly with the exception of agenda item 14, entitled "Zone of peace and cooperation of the South Atlantic"; agenda item 59, entitled "Holocaust remembrance"; agenda item 71, entitled "Request for an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on whether the unilateral declaration of independence of Kosovo is in accordance with international law"; agenda item 114, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations"; agenda item 126, entitled "United Nations pension system"; agenda item 127, entitled "Administrative and budgetary coordination of the United Nations with the specialized agencies and the International Atomic Energy Agency"; agenda item 145, entitled "Financing of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone"; and agenda item 154, entitled "Judges of the International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed on the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991".

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of all of those items at the present session?

It was so decided.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to inform members that we have still to hear statements on the programme budget implications of draft resolutions A/63/L.103, under agenda item 107, "Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit", and A/63/L.101, under agenda item 114 (a), "Cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union", as well as the draft resolution contained in paragraph 55 of the report of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the General Assembly (A/63/959), under agenda item 110, "Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly".

I propose to suspend the meeting now and to resume it at 3 p.m. so that the Assembly may continue its work.

The meeting was suspended at 12.10 p.m. and resumed at 4.05 p.m.

Agenda item 7 (*continued*)

Organization of work, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items

The President: Members will recall that the General Assembly closed consideration of agenda item 71, entitled "Request for an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on whether the unilateral declaration of independence of Kosovo is in accordance with international law", earlier in this meeting. I have since received a request from the representative of Serbia to reopen consideration of the item. May I take it that the General Assembly agrees to reopen agenda item 71?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 71

Request for an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on whether the unilateral declaration of independence of Kosovo is in accordance with international law

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Serbia.

Mr. Starčević (Serbia): This morning, I was ready to speak on this item and my name was inscribed on the list of speakers, but somehow, due to some oversight by the Secretariat or otherwise, I was not called to speak and the item was included in a list of other items that were deferred for consideration to the sixty-fourth session.

This agenda item was designed in order to ask for an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on this issue. Resolution 63/3 was adopted under this item, and we are now awaiting the opinion of the International Court of Justice. Therefore, the issue has not been closed. It is an open item and an open question, and therefore my delegation requests that item 71 be maintained on the agenda of the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

The President: Members have heard the request by the representative of Serbia to include agenda item 71 in the provisional agenda of the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to include this item in the provisional agenda of its sixty-fourth session?

It was so decided.

The President: The Assembly has thus concluded its consideration of agenda item 71.

Agenda item 110 (*continued*)

Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly

Report of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the General Assembly (A/63/959)

Draft resolution (A/63/959, para. 55)

The President: We shall now proceed to consider the draft resolution contained in paragraph 55 of document A/63/959. In that connection, I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Shaaban (Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management): In connection with the draft resolution contained in paragraph 55 of document A/63/959, I wish to put on record the following statement of financial implications on behalf of the Secretary-General, in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly.

By paragraph 2 of the draft resolution, the General Assembly would decide

> "to establish, at its sixty-fourth session, an Ad Hoc Working Group on the revitalization of the General Assembly ... and [t]o submit a report thereon to the Assembly at its sixty-fourth session".

With regard to the functioning of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the General Assembly, it is understood that the Working Group would use the conference facilities and services allocated to the General Assembly and its working groups, that the Working Group cannot meet in parallel with the General Assembly plenary, and that no two working groups of the General Assembly can meet simultaneously. Accordingly, should the General Assembly adopt the draft resolution contained in paragraph 55 of the report of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the General Assembly, no additional requirements would arise under the programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009 or the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2010-2011.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution entitled "Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly", contained in paragraph 55 of the report of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the General Assembly (A/63/959). May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt the draft resolution?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 63/309).

The President: Before giving the floor to the speakers in explanation of vote after the vote, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Yaroshevich (Belarus): We appreciate the tremendous work done by the Co-Chairs of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the General

Assembly, the Permanent Representatives of Ecuador and Norway, and their open-minded, goal-oriented approach. We would also like to commend the Member States and political groups that made valuable contributions to the report (A/63/959) and resolution 63/309.

We praise the active participation in our work of the five permanent (P5) delegations of the Security Council. The Belarusian delegation believes that the interest and engagement of the permanent members of the Security Council in our deliberations on how to enhance the role of the General Assembly are key factors in the success of our common endeavour. We also sincerely hope that the P5 recognize their special responsibility in facilitating — or sometimes simply allowing — the bold and meaningful strides of the entire membership to increase the role of the General Assembly and regard the whole revitalization process not as an unavoidable nuisance, but rather as an indispensable way of ensuring the viability and good health of the whole United Nations system.

The report that we have just adopted is a comprehensive and well-balanced document with vivid evidence of the results of our work. It contains the ideas that we have expressed and briefings that we have heard. We believe that the following key views and ideas that found their due place in the report should be developed further in the course of the next session of the General Assembly.

First is the importance of holding thematic debates on issues of relevance to the international community and of concern and interest to the United Nations. Such debates should be more results-oriented and could lead to the adoption of a resolution or the establishment of an open-ended group on the issue discussed, and a list of proposals made by Member States during the debates could be drafted.

Second is the support for increasing the public visibility of the work of the General Assembly. We have to continue examining the reasons for the apparent public disconnectedness with the work of the General Assembly by extending cooperation with major media outlets and using modern media techniques. In that regard, we note with great interest the proposals made by the representative of the United Nations Correspondents Association during her briefing on ways that the General Assembly's work could be facilitated, such as the quick delivery of statements to the press, easy access for the media to General Assembly meetings, indication of speakers' names and titles during video or television transmission of meetings, and enhanced capacity and institutional memory of the spokesperson section of the Office of the General Assembly President.

Third is the continued analysis of the reasons for the lack of implementation of previously adopted resolutions on the revitalization of the General Assembly. The chart worked out as a result of the work of our Group during the previous session should form the basis for such an exercise.

Resolution 63/309, which we have just adopted, is the first substantive resolution on General Assembly revitalization in years. It covers most of the themes that we discussed and includes our conclusions. In adopting that document, we highly praise the tenacity and expertise of the Co-Chairs, as well as the good will of the many delegations that made the resolution possible.

During one of our very fruitful meetings in June, the Belarusian delegation took the liberty of quoting a popular music band from Norway, since one of our Co-Chairs was the Permanent Representative of Norway, to urge our Co-Chairs and other delegations to "Stay on these roads". Today let me quote the name of the brand new album issued by the group this summer, which is called "Foot of the mountain". With the help of the Co-Chairs and colleagues, we have climbed much higher than that. The foot of the mountain is far behind us and, with some courage and determination, the peak of the mountain should be conquered soon.

Since today is the last day of the sixty-third session of the General Assembly, the Belarusian delegation would like to wish you, Mr. President, good health, well-being and success in all your future endeavours.

Ms. Rovirosa (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, allow me, Mr. President, to express the great appreciation of the Rio Group for your leadership of the work of the sixty-third session of the General Assembly, which we are concluding today, and to wish you every success in your future endeavours.

The Rio Group welcomes the painstaking and instructive work of the Co-Chairs, Ambassador Espinosa of Ecuador and Ambassador Wetland of Norway, and reiterates its steadfast commitment to the

revitalization process of the General Assembly. The Rio Group believes that resolution 63/309, which we adopted today, covers the main concerns expressed by the various groups and delegations throughout the process, in which we witnessed the active and substantive participation of the membership with a view to strengthening the principal organ of the United Nations.

The Rio Group calls for continued work to improve the Assembly's working methods through the rationalization of the items on its agenda and the United Nations voting system. The Rio Group supports the process launched to further strengthen institutionalization of the Office of the President of the General Assembly, acknowledging the progress in recent years.

However, the Group believes it important to continue to consider measures and procedures that will enable us to make best use of the current human and financial resources available to the Office of the President. The Rio Group also considers it essential that the General Assembly consider matters of general interest, which will lead to its enhanced authority, in particular with regard to issues that need the appropriate and timely response of the Organization.

With regard to the role and responsibility of the General Assembly in the process of selecting the Secretary-General, the Rio Group is convinced that a transparent and inclusive selection process should be established in which the General Assembly plays a more engaged role, in accordance with the provisions of the Charter and the resolutions previously adopted on the issue by the relevant body.

The President: I should like to express my sincere thanks to Ambassador Maria Fernanda Espinosa of Ecuador and Ambassador Morten Wetland of Norway, Co-Chairs of the Ad Hoc Working Group, who so ably conducted the discussions and complex negotiations of the Group. I am sure that members of the Assembly join me in extending to them our sincere appreciation.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 110?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 114 (*continued*)

Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations

(a) Cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union

Draft resolution (A/63/L.101)

The President: Members will recall that the Assembly held the debate on agenda item 114 and its sub-items (a) to (u) at its 36th and 37th plenary meetings, on 3 November 2008.

I now give the floor to the representative of Algeria to introduce draft resolution A/63/L.101.

Mr. Benmehidi (Algeria): At the outset, allow me, on behalf of the African Group, to express our deep appreciation to you, Mr. President, for the commitment, wisdom and excellent skills you have demonstrated while presiding over the sixty-third session of the General Assembly. We would like to wish you every success in your future endeavours.

On behalf of the African Group, I am pleased to introduce the draft resolution contained in document A/63/L.101, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and African Union". I would like to underline that, since the publication of the draft resolution, the following countries have joined the African Group as co-sponsors: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

The preamble of the draft resolution provides an overview of the progress achieved so far in strengthening cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union, in particular during the past few years, during which the structures of the African Union in various fields have been established, most notably in the area of the maintenance of peace and security. The draft resolution recognizes the pivotal need to bring Africa into the mainstream of the global economy and to strengthen the global partnership to address the special development needs of Africa, in particular the eradication of poverty.

In its operative part, the draft resolution contains an agenda for urgent action, notably an appeal for the implementation of the declaration on enhancing United

Nations-African Union cooperation, including the framework for the 10-year capacity-building programme for the African Union. It further requests the United Nations system to intensify its assistance to the African Union, as appropriate, in strengthening the institutional and operational capacity of its Peace and Security Council. The draft resolution also stresses the need for the United Nations and the African Union to develop close cooperation and joint programmes and to intensify efforts to address illicit arms trafficking, the global fight against terrorism, the promotion and protection of human rights in Africa and efforts to implement the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

For its part, the African Group would like to reaffirm the commitment and determination of our Governments and our peoples to fully assume their role. We attach great significance to joining our efforts with those of the United Nations on the basis of the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the Constitutive Act of the African Union.

I would like to express our gratitude to all delegations that have extended their support to the African Group in co-sponsoring the draft resolution. It is our hope that the General Assembly will adopt it by consensus.

The President: We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/63/L.101, in connection with which I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Shaaban (Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management): In connection with draft resolution A/63/L.101, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union", I wish to place on the record the following statement of financial implications on behalf of the Secretary-General, in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly.

By paragraph 3 of the draft resolution, the General Assembly would emphasize the need to pursue the ongoing measures to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of United Nations and African Union cooperation; and would recommend the continued improvement of the field presence of the United Nations Secretariat at the headquarters of the African Union, recognizing the need to ensure an appropriate level of representation at the United Nations Liaison Office in Addis Ababa commensurate with the increasing political integration of the African Union, the responsibilities for implementing all aspects of the 10-year capacity-building programme, coordinating the United Nations system in existing and emerging areas of cooperation in peace and security, political and humanitarian affairs, in order to enhance the strategic and operational partnership between the United Nations and the African Union and its subregions.

In that regard, it is envisaged that the implementation of that paragraph could potentially result in financial implications. However, in order to ensure comprehensive, effective and efficient arrangements in support of the partnership between the United Nations and the African Union, the level of representation at the United Nations Liaison Office in Addis Ababa would be reviewed, taking into account the provisions of paragraph 3 of draft resolution A/63/L.101 in the context of the report of the Secretary-General referred to in paragraph 4 of the same draft resolution. Programme budget implications, if any, would be dealt with in accordance with established procedures.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/63/L.101. May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/63/L.101?

Draft resolution A/63/L.101 was adopted (resolution 63/310).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 114 and of agenda item 114 as a whole?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 107 (*continued*)

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/881)

Draft resolution (A/63/L.103)

The President: It is my understanding that it would be desirable to defer consideration of the report of the Secretary-General (A/63/881) to the sixty-fourth session under the agenda items entitled "Report of the Peacebuilding Commission" and "Report of the Secretary-General on the Peacebuilding Fund". May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to defer consideration of the report of the Secretary-General to the sixty-fourth session under the agenda items entitled "Report of the Peacebuilding

Commission" and "Report of the Secretary-General on the Peacebuilding Fund"?

It was so decided.

The President: Before we proceed further, I should like to consult the Assembly with a view to proceeding to consider draft resolution A/63/L.103 at this meeting. In that connection, since the draft resolution was circulated only earlier today, it would be necessary to waive the relevant provision of rule 78 of the rules of procedure, which reads as follows:

> "As a general rule, no proposal, shall be discussed or put to the vote at any meeting of the General Assembly unless copies of it have been circulated to all delegations not later than the day preceding the meeting."

Unless I hear any objection, I shall take it that the Assembly agrees with this proposal.

It was so decided.

The President: I invite the attention of members to operative paragraphs 2, 3 and 12 of the draft resolution and to inform them of the following technical corrections to the text.

In operative paragraph 2, the words "the concept" should be deleted. The paragraph will therefore read, "supports that the composite entity shall be led by", with the rest of the paragraph remaining unchanged.

In operative paragraph 3, the phrase "the composition of" should be deleted. The paragraph should therefore read:

> "Requests the Secretary-General to produce, for the consideration of the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session, a comprehensive proposal specifying, inter alia, the mission statement of the composite entity, the organizational arrangements, including an organizational chart, funding and the executive board to oversee its operational activities",

with the rest of the paragraph remaining unchanged.

In operative paragraph 12, the word "united" should be replaced with "untied".

Should there be any other technical corrections in other languages, representatives are invited to inform the Secretariat directly.

We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/63/L.103, as orally corrected.

In connection with draft resolution A/63/L.103, I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Shaaban (Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management): In connection with draft resolution A/63/L.103, entitled "System-wide coherence", I wish to place on record the following statement of financial implications on behalf of the Secretary-General, in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly.

In paragraphs 3 and 16 of the draft resolution, the General Assembly would request the Secretary-General to produce, for the consideration of the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session, a comprehensive proposal specifying, inter alia, the mission statement of the composite entity, the organizational arrangements, including an organizational chart, funding and the executive board to oversee its operational activities in order to commence intergovernmental negotiations; and request the Secretary-General to create a central repository of information on United Nations operational activities for development, including disaggregated statistics on all funding sources and expenditures, building on the Secretary-General's comprehensive statistical analysis of the financing of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, and to ensure appropriate and user-friendly online access and regular updating of the information contained therein.

As regards the request contained in paragraph 3 of the draft resolution, on strengthening the institutional arrangements for support of gender equality and the empowerment of women, there are insufficient details at this time on the modalities of the new composite entity. In the absence of the agreed structure, including a precise number and level of posts, as well as of an indication of the proposed activities and their cost, it is not possible to prepare any reliable estimates of financial and administrative implications. It is anticipated that, when all these issues are addressed in the comprehensive proposal to be produced for the consideration of the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session, as requested in draft resolution A/63/L.103, the related financial implications would be issued in accordance with established procedure.

As regards the request contained in paragraph 16 of draft resolution A/63/L.103 to create a central repository of information on United Nations operational activities for development, it is recalled that, in paragraph 28 of its resolution 62/208, the General Assembly, inter alia, requested the Secretary-General, making use of existing capacities within the Secretariat and, if necessary, voluntary contributions: (a) to continue to broaden and improve the coverage, timeliness, reliability, quality and comparability of system-wide financial data, definitions and classifications for the financial reporting of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, in a coherent way; (b) to build a comprehensive, sustainable and consistent financial data and reporting system for the operational activities for development of all the relevant organizations and entities of the United Nations system; and (c) to include, in this regard, in the report to be submitted to the Economic and Social Council in 2008 a concise assessment of progress made and a description of planned activities.

As indicated in the report of the Secretary-General on comprehensive statistical analysis of the financing of operational activities for development of the United Nations system for 2006 (A/63/71), the work to build a comprehensive and sustainable financial data and reporting system on Untied Nations operational activities would aim to provide comprehensive data and analysis on United Nations system financing that is easily accessible to all, and data and information on trends in financing, disaggregated at the level of each entity, and to amalgamate them for a consolidated statement of United Nations financing. Consequently, the creation of a central repository of information on United Nations operational activities constitutes part of the ongoing work to build a comprehensive and sustainable financial data and reporting system and would be financed from the resources already available for this purpose under section 9, "Economic and Social Council Affairs", of the programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009.

In summary, at this stage there are no programme budget implications arising from draft resolution A/63/L.103.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/63/L.103, entitled "System-wide coherence". May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/63/L.103, as orally corrected?

Draft resolution A/63/L.103, as orally corrected, was adopted (resolution 63/311).

The President: I give the floor to those representatives wishing to make statements in explanation of position on the resolution just adopted. May I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt): I have the honour to make this statement in explanation of position on resolution 63/311, entitled "System-wide coherence", on behalf of the Joint Coordinating Committee of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 and China.

The Joint Coordinating Committee would like to express its sincere appreciation to you, Mr. President, and to the two co-chairs of the informal consultations, the Permanent Representatives of Namibia and Spain, for all your efforts in guiding the process of system-wide coherence forward throughout the consultations in the General Assembly. I should also like to thank the Secretary-General and the Deputy Secretary-General for having actively responded to the requests for the necessary reports that have been and will be important for continued intergovernmental work on this subject. The Joint Coordinating Committee would like to make the following comments on the resolution.

The Joint Coordinating Committee strongly supports the consolidation of the four entities in the United Nations system dealing with gender issues into a composite entity, as stated in operative paragraph 1 of the resolution. In the same context, and based on operative paragraph 3, the Joint Coordinating Committee looks forward to proactive, intensive intergovernmental negotiations during the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly on all details of that composite entity, including, inter alia, its mandate, mission statement, organizational arrangements, intergovernmental oversight, funding and executive board.

With regard to operative paragraph 2, the Joint Coordinating Committee supports that the composite entity, upon its establishment, shall be led by an under-secretary-general to be appointed by and to report to the Secretary-General.

As we move forward on the gender architecture issue, the Joint Coordinating Committee considers the issue of funding to be key and a top priority for system-wide coherence. The Joint Coordinating Committee strongly believes that it is vital to achieve substantive progress on this issue during the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly. The Joint Coordinating Committee is also of the view that discussions on this issue should be conducted in an action-oriented and proactive manner. They should build on the discussion notes on strengthening funding of operational activities referred to in the seventh preambular paragraph of the resolution, particularly when the General Assembly addresses the continued imbalance between core and non-core funding outlined in paragraphs 13 and 14 of the resolution, as well as the urgent need to increase the quantity of funding.

On governance, the Joint Coordinating Committee stresses the need for all partners to work together to make progress on this front during the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly. Therefore, and as stated in paragraph 6 of the resolution, the Joint Coordinating Committee looks forward to receiving actionable proposals from the Secretary-General during the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly on improving the governance of operational activities, the focus of which should not be limited to existing intergovernmental bodies. These proposals should build on the discussion notes on strengthening the governance of operational activities referred to in the seventh preambular paragraph of the resolution.

Additionally, with regard to paragraph 7 of the present resolution, which requests the Secretary-General to propose modalities to the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session for the submission and approval of common country programmes on a voluntary basis, the Joint Coordinating Committee stresses that our main terms of reference in the coordination of these proposals shall remain paragraph 139 of General Assembly resolution 62/208, on the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, on the need for an independent evaluation of voluntary efforts at the country level of some programme country pilots, as well as the fifth preambular paragraph of General Assembly resolution 62/277 on system-wide coherence, and paragraphs 19 and 20 of resolution 63/311 addressing the same issue.

Finally, the Joint Coordinating Committee reiterates its continued intention to engage actively and constructively on all issues relating to system-wide coherence during the sixty-fourth session through an integrated approach, as stipulated in paragraph 22 of resolution 63/311. It is imperative to achieve the same level of progress on all five issues under discussion through a single undertaking at the conclusion of this process of system-wide coherence. Accordingly, the Joint Coordinating Committee looks forward to an extensive process of intergovernmental consultations on any future draft resolution or decision on system-wide coherence. The intergovernmental negotiating process should follow a workplan that would be developed at an early stage to ensure an open, transparent and all-inclusive intergovernmental negotiating process that would lead to the desired agreement by consensus.

Mr. Lidén (Sweden): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The following countries align themselves with this statement: Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, Liechtenstein, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia.

The European Union warmly welcomes the strong and unanimous support of the General Assembly for the establishment of a composite gender entity within the United Nations system. The consolidation of the four existing entities into one single structure, headed by an under-secretary-general, will strengthen the capacity, accountability and effectiveness of the United Nations system in the area of gender. The EU believes that the new entity will bring an important shift to the work of the United Nations in the area of gender equality and the empowerment of women. On the eve of the fifteenth anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action, the decision today to reform the current gender architecture could not have been timelier.

There is widespread recognition of the need to improve gender equality and the empowerment of women in order to build sustainable, just and developed societies. Gender equality is a prerequisite for reaching the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other internationally agreed development goals. Meeting the gender-related MDG targets is proving to be particularly challenging. The United Nations needs to mobilize if these targets are to be reached by 2015. There is also a growing realization of

the urgency of addressing the needs of women during armed conflict and the essential role of women in peacebuilding and reconstruction.

Through the new entity, the United Nations will be able to play the central role it must play for the empowerment of women in all regions of the world, meeting the ever-increasing requests of Governments for support in this area. It will help to close the current gap between the normative work and the operational work in the area. Moreover, it will strengthen gender mainstreaming and help other parts of the United Nations system to improve their work on gender.

During the past three years, detailed options for the new structure have been debated by Member States on the basis of information provided by the Secretary-General in earlier reports. The European Union stands ready to work with other Member States to finalize, through a swift process, the remaining details for the new entity. We should set ourselves an ambitious goal, aiming to finish the intergovernmental process in the first quarter of 2010, at the latest. We are almost there. There should be no further delays in operationalizing this essential reform.

The European Union thanks the Secretary-General and the Deputy Secretary-General, as well as the President of the General Assembly, for their crucial support for gender reform, and urges the Secretary-General, on the basis of today's resolution, to begin the process of appointing the new under-secretary-general.

On behalf of the European Union, I also want to thank the co-chairs, my colleagues Ambassador Mbuende of Namibia and Ambassador Yáñez-Barnuevo of Spain, for their tireless efforts in bringing Member States to this consensus decision on the establishment of a new gender entity and for bringing about progress in other important areas within the system-wide coherence process.

In this regard, the European Union warmly welcomes the progress made so far in the areas of funding and governance. The European Union recognizes that improving the governance structures and funding modalities for the United Nations development work is essential if the United Nations is to be an effective partner for developing countries as they work towards achieving the MDGs. The European Union is willing to contribute constructively to further progress in those areas.

In addition, the European Union welcomes the acknowledgement by the General Assembly of the interim assessments of progress made and challenges remaining in those countries that are implementing the "delivering as one" approach, including the programme country pilots. The EU will also continue to engage in this area within the system-wide coherence process during the sixty-fourth session.

Finally, the European Union wants to recognize the essential contribution of civil society over the past three years towards the new gender entity. The ongoing dialogue between States and a wide range of organizations, at the country level and at the United Nations, has helped us to identify the gaps, focus our deliberations and alert us to the urgency of reform. It is essential to find sustainable formats for this important dialogue to continue once the gender entity is operational.

Mr. Pálsson (Iceland): I have the honour to deliver this explanation of position on behalf of the five Nordic countries: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. The Nordic countries welcome today's long-awaited unanimous decision to create a new and consolidated gender entity of the United Nations. This is a fresh start for our Organization in promoting gender equality and strengthening gender mainstreaming for improved effectiveness and impact, including at the country level.

The strong support of the Secretary-General and the Deputy Secretary-General throughout has been of great importance. The Secretary-General has made it clear that the time is now ripe for action, a view we fully share. Today's adoption will enable the Secretary-General to take the next important steps towards realizing the new entity. We look forward to the appointment of an under-secretary-general and believe that the new entity should be up and running by the middle of 2010. There is no time to lose.

The Nordic countries want to recognize the role of civil society in our deliberations over the past three years and reiterate the need to find sustainable formats for this important dialogue to continue once the gender entity is operational. With a strong and efficient new gender entity in place, we must all commit to the ambitious goal of increasing voluntary funding to the entity in the years to come.

The Nordic countries also look forward to following up on the strengthening of the governance

and funding system of operational activities for development. With a more accountable, transparent and efficient governance that ensures the delivery of better results on the ground, we believe that more and more predictable funding will follow. In this respect, we should start drawing on the experiences gained by the countries that have taken part in the "delivering as one" process.

Finally, allow me to thank the two co-chairs, Ambassadors Mbuende of Namibia and Yáñez-Barnuevo of Spain, for their diligent work, as well as you, Mr. President. Indeed, we would like to congratulate you on the result obtained on this final day of your tenure.

Ms. Davies (Australia): I have the honour to speak on behalf of Canada, Australia and New Zealand (CANZ).

Canada, Australia and New Zealand congratulate the co-chairs for their important work in fostering consensus among Member States on the range of issues. The adoption of resolution 63/311 clearly demonstrates Member States' will to move forward in supporting greater effectiveness in all five areas of system-wide coherence and represents a call to the Secretary-General and the wider United Nations to support these efforts.

CANZ supports the creation of a composite entity led by an under-secretary-general that will consolidate the four agencies working to advance equality between women and men and women's empowerment. This is required to provide a stronger voice for women worldwide and to deliver more effective support to all countries in implementing our collective mandate and commitments.

We are pleased that resolution 63/311 documents the General Assembly's strong commitment to creating a single consolidated organization in the form of a composite entity, with the details to be determined at the next session of the Assembly to complete its establishment. We understand that today's decision means that at the next session we will move quickly with concrete decisions on functions and organizational arrangements. In that regard, we look forward to the early recruitment of an under-secretary-general.

CANZ is also pleased that progress has been made in three important areas of the system-wide coherence agenda, namely, the governance and funding of operational activities and delivering as one. We look forward to concrete decisions with regard to, inter alia, the approval of common country programmes, thus ensuring more efficient United Nations support to those Member States that have voluntarily adopted this approach. CANZ remains committed to improving the effectiveness of the United Nations operational activities, including through the system-wide coherence process.

Mr. Okuda (Japan): First of all, I would like to join the many previous speakers in commending the very excellent and efficient manner in which you, Mr. President, have conducted the work of the sixty-third session of the General Assembly. My delegation also wishes you every success in your future endeavours.

We would also like to express our sincere appreciation to the co-chairs, Ambassador Mbuende and Ambassador Yáñez-Barnuevo, for their committed leadership and tireless efforts to lead this important discussion on United Nations system-wide coherence.

With regard to the resolution that was presented by the co-chairs, my delegation, with maximum flexibility and tolerance, decided to join the consensus on its adoption. The Government of Japan strongly believes that it is crucial to promote gender mainstreaming. To that end, we support the efforts made on the architectural reform of gender organizations to promote United Nations system-wide coherence. However, we would like to take this opportunity to explain our position on that very significant issue.

First, we would like to express our strong dissatisfaction at the fact that the resolution was introduced to Member States with less than a week remaining in the sixty-third session. Furthermore, in spite of our concerns relating to the resolution, there was no opportunity for open consultation, neither among Member States nor among concerned delegations. We are displeased by such an opaque consultation process.

Secondly, we would like to reiterate some of the critical aspects that we have repeatedly emphasized in past consultations with regard to the establishment of the new gender entity. My delegation firmly maintains the position that, in order to avoid unnecessary bloating of the new entity, the principle of scrap-and-build should be strictly applied to rebuilding a streamlined entity that is efficient and meets the needs of the times. By conserving United Nations resources,

creating an effective United Nations system and investing the resources saved in developing countries, the benefits to those really needing support will be increased to the maximum extent possible. We would therefore like to emphasize once again that if we cannot secure those resources, we cannot achieve the goals of United Nations system-wide coherence.

Thirdly, my delegation would like to reaffirm that, in the course of future consultations specifying details of structural reform, we should ensure a consultation process that is transparent and secures adequate and time for consideration. It is also very important that consultations among Member States be held based on the established financial rules and procedures as set forth by the United Nations.

Finally, my delegation pledges its proactive engagement in the forthcoming consultations to discuss the issue of the composite entity, with respect to how effectively and efficiently gender will be mainstreamed in all United Nations activities and to thoroughly discuss matters pertaining to the mandate of the under-secretary-general who will lead the composite entity, including financial aspects.

Ms. DiCarlo (United States of America): The United States was pleased to join the consensus on the system-wide coherence resolution (63/311). The broad support for this issue is heartening. It shows that, after several years of intense consultations, Member States have come together to take a number of practical decisions to further our shared objective of a more effective and coherent United Nations development system. We thank the co-chairs, the Permanent Representatives of Namibia and Spain, for their tireless efforts over the past year, which led to the adoption of the resolution.

We strongly endorse the resolution's call for consolidating the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women, the Division for the Advancement of Women, the United Nations Development Fund for Women and the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women into a composite entity headed by an under-secretary-general. Over the past several months, there has been a growing realization that a composite entity offers the best hope for improving how the United Nations can help women worldwide. We are confident that such consolidation will improve the situation in the field. Developing nations stand to gain from the changes that the composite entity will effect on the ground — progress necessary to reach the Millennium Development Goals. All nations will benefit from the advances that the entity will bring about on women's equality, empowerment and rights.

It is essential that the head of the agency be an under-secretary-general. We ask Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to move expeditiously on appointing an under-secretary-general with in-depth knowledge, a strong track record on gender issues and credibility within the women's movement. Member States still need to decide on many details surrounding the composite entity, including questions of staffing, funding and governance. Those are important questions, and the United States stands ready to work with colleagues on those issues. The sooner the under-secretary-general is in place, the sooner he or she can offer the benefit of his or her views to Member States.

In accordance with paragraph 8 of the resolution, we look forward to seeing comprehensive proposals on the gender entity developed as quickly as possible in the course of the next session of the General Assembly, so that intergovernmental deliberations on the entity's parameters can get under way. The resolution also contains important language on the governance and operations of the United Nations development system that should further improve the transparency and effectiveness of a broad range of development activities.

The United States looks forward to working with partners to make further progress in those areas during the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly. Working together, we can put the United Nations development system on a path towards stronger and more predictable funding.

Ms. Rosirosa (Mexico) (spoke in Spanish): I would like to express my delegation's gratitude to Ambassador Kaire Mueongendje Mbuende of Namibia and Ambassador Juan Antonio Yáñez-Barnuevo of Spain and their teams for their excellent work in conducting this stage of the discussions process.

As we have indicated, we believe it essential to make progress in increasing the coherence and effectiveness of the United Nations development system. We must maximize the benefits of international development efforts, particularly in a complicated

economic context such as the current economic and financial crisis.

We must consider at the intergovernmental level the specific implications of reform for efforts on the ground. It is time to move forward and produce concrete results, although we understand the difficulties posed by the transformation of a large and complex system.

With regard to the issue of strengthening the institutional arrangements to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women, Mexico strongly supports the establishment of a composite entity. Such an entity should preserve the mandates of existing institutions — the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, the Division for the Advancement of Women, the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women and the United Nations Development Fund for Women.

The new entity should be equipped with the leadership, visibility and coherence necessary to accelerate progress in this very important area, both within the United Nations system and on the ground, through increased operational activities and technical assistance to countries requesting it.

That is why Mexico supported the proposed text. However, we must also point out that, from our perspective, the efforts to improve the processes of the system — including the establishment of the composite entity — should be based on the building of synergies and use existing resources. Greater coherence must entail not a more burdensome institutional structure, but rather more effective arrangements.

Mexico considers the adoption of the resolution to be a significant step forward for the Organization — a step in the right direction. We also believe that much remains to be done and that we should engage in an intensive process of intergovernmental discussions and negotiations at the forthcoming session of the Assembly. My delegation will continue to participate enthusiastically and constructively in that process.

Mr. Mahiga (United Republic of Tanzania): At the outset, I should like to thank the two co-facilitators, Ambassador Kaire Mbuende of Namibia and Ambassador Juan Antonio Yáñez-Barnuevo of Spain, for their work in advancing the intergovernmental deliberations on system-wide coherence. Having been a co-facilitator myself, I know how arduous that task is. I congratulate them on their energy and creativity in facilitating a consensus on the subject at the sixty-third session of the General Assembly.

My delegation is pleased and encouraged to see that a consensus has been reached in all areas — particularly on the gender entity — with strong leadership at the Under-Secretary-General level. We look forward to further discussions with a view to concluding and operationalizing a composite form of the gender entity as soon as possible at the sixty-fourth session.

While significant progress has also been reached in the other areas of funding and governance, further efforts and concessions are still needed from all of us so as to secure balanced agreements on all areas.

As a pilot country, Tanzania can confirm that the reform process on system-wide coherence in many areas of development at the country level has had a transformative impact on the development of my country. It has also enabled us to assume national ownership of the development process in partnership with the United Nations. We thus wish to underscore the need for the speedy execution of the independent evaluation of the pilot countries in the area of delivering as one by the United Nations.

I should also like to take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General and the Deputy Secretary-General for their leadership, support and encouragement of the entire membership in engaging in implementing system-wide coherence reform as set out in the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document (resolution 60/1).

Finally, I wish to congratulate you, Mr. President, and to thank you for your historic contributions as President of the General Assembly. You have left an indelible mark on the leadership, thinking and wisdom that will be part of the depository of the United Nations. We wish you every success in your future work, and we thank you for what you have bequeathed to us.

Mr. Alimov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian delegation joined the consensus on resolution 63/311, on system-wide coherence. Nevertheless, we cannot fail to express our regret that the text was submitted to the General Assembly for consideration without a review or substantial and open intergovernmental consultations. We do not believe

that that is fully in keeping with the mandate entrusted to the facilitators of the process.

In that connection, we wish to express and place on record our position on certain provisions of the resolution that are of concern to us. In particular, we are not prepared to decisively support the establishment of a composite entity on gender issues until we receive information about its institutional arrangements and financing mechanisms and until answers are provided to the many questions raised during the discussions that took place within the framework of the system-wide coherence process.

Once again, we wish to reiterate that we do not consider it necessary to focus exclusively on intergovernmental bodies in the reform on system-wide coherence. In addition, it is essential to improve transparency and reporting in the work of the Secretariat and between the Secretariat and its coordinating structures.

Finally, we are also concerned about operative paragraph 7 of the resolution, which must be brought into conformity with the provisions of resolution 62/208, entitled "Triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system". We would not like to see a situation in which the General Assembly takes a decision on a text that was distributed after the deadline set out in rule 78 of the General Assembly's rules of procedure. I do not think we are being effective in this regard.

My delegation does not believe that there is a consensus among Member States on the content. We would be establishing a procedure and a precedent that would have a real impact on the effectiveness of the General Assembly and on the way in which it adopts documents.

Ms. Hendrie (United Kingdom): I would like to align myself with the comments made by the representative of Sweden on behalf of the European Union and to make a few additional comments on behalf of the United Kingdom.

The United Kingdom has been a strong supporter of the system-wide coherence process for many years. The more effective the United Nations development system is, the more the United Nations, in partnership with national Governments, will make a real difference, in real time, for real people in need. In the current economic crisis, this is more important than ever, so today's decision is critical.

Like others who have spoken today, we warmly welcome the unanimous, strong support of Member States expressed in resolution 63/311, which we have just adopted, for the establishment of the composite gender entity. By establishing that entity we are sending an important message to women and girls around the world. We are saying that the States Members of the United Nations are prepared to take concrete action to help alleviate their disproportionate suffering from conflict and poverty, and that we are committed to empowering them and unlocking their unrealized potential to make our world more peaceful, just and prosperous. It is important to recognize this achievement, for which we have worked so hard, especially on the eve of the fifteenth anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action.

The United Kingdom will at least double its core voluntary funding for the work of the United Nations on women's equality through the new body. We need now to move forward quickly with its implementation. Strong leadership of the new entity will be critical. We call upon the Secretary-General to move forward with the recruitment of the under-secretary-general. We also call upon the membership to formalize as soon as possible the details of the new entity. We need to see concrete progress in the coming months.

Meanwhile, on funding and governance, delivering as one and business practice harmonization, this resolution shows that we can move forward. We are pleased to see the support for developing proposals on common country programme approvals. On funding, we look forward to discussing positively and constructively with Member States at the next session how we can build on this year's discussion and further improve the funding of the system. It is clear that core funding remains a critical source of support for the United Nations development system. The United Kingdom provides a significant amount of core funding already and has increased its core funding this year. And we are ready to do more.

On delivering as one, we welcome progress being made on the country-led evaluations and see these as sufficient basis for the Secretary-General to move forward with the independent evaluation, as a priority. We have waited long already for evidence of progress made.

Finally, let me warmly thank the co-chairs for their tireless work in delivering this resolution today and achieving consensus. We are particularly encouraged by the strong statements of support here today from colleagues from diverse regions. Let me also thank you, Mr. President, for your unwavering support for the establishment of the gender entity.

Mr. Kelly (Ireland): Ireland aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Sweden on behalf of the European Union.

We would like to thank our co-chairs, the Permanent Representative of Namibia and the Permanent Representative of Spain, and their colleagues for their tireless work this session in steering us to the very important resolution we have just adopted, resolution 63/311.

We warmly welcome the unanimous support for the establishment of a composite gender entity, which will consolidate the four existing entities and be headed by an under-secretary-general. This progress in strengthening the capacity, accountability and effectiveness of the work of the United Nations on gender equality and women's empowerment has been long awaited and is urgently needed. It is vital that this composite entity become operational as soon as possible, and we look forward to a swift transitional period, as we finalize the outstanding areas relating to how the entity will function. In that regard, we request the Secretary-General to begin the process of appointing an under-secretary-general and provide us with the requested proposals as soon as possible so that Member States may finalize outstanding issues at the next session.

Ireland also welcomes the progress made in other important areas of system-wide coherence, including funding and governance. We look forward to receiving the Secretary-General's proposals in these areas as soon as possible so that we can continue our work in improving the governance structures and funding modalities for the United Nations system. Strengthening these areas is essential if we are to realize our collective vision of an efficient, effective and well-resourced United Nations system as a strong partner for developing countries.

We welcome the fact that the General Assembly has again acknowledged the progress made and the challenges remaining for those countries which are voluntarily implementing the delivering as one approach. We reiterate the General Assembly's request to the Secretary-General to urgently move ahead with an independent evaluation of lessons learned from those countries, in line with the well established principles of national ownership and leadership.

We believe that the adoption of this consensus resolution by the General Assembly is a significant step forward towards a better performing and more effective United Nations, particularly in the area of gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as in other important areas of operational activities. We look forward to continuing this work at the next session.

Finally, Sir, my delegation would like to thank you for your unwavering support for this process throughout the year and to congratulate you on all your accomplishments during your term as President of the General Assembly.

Mr. Park In-kook (Republic of Korea): The Republic of Korea welcomes the unanimous adoption of resolution 63/311, on system-wide coherence, which was the result of long and broad interaction among Member States under the leadership of the former and current co-facilitators, the representatives of Spain, Namibia, Ireland and the United Republic of Tanzania.

We believe that this resolution is a historic landmark in the system-wide coherence process, in particular in the efforts of the United Nations to meet the needs, aspirations and rights of the world's women and to help them make best use of their talents, by establishing a composite gender entity. In that regard, we highly appreciate the strong leadership of the Secretary-General, Deputy Secretary-General Migiro and the President of the General Assembly, and the hard work of the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women to facilitate the consultations and move the discussion forward with a view to reaching a consensus.

My delegation expects the Secretary-General to implement this resolution in a timely manner, so that it can bear fruit as early as possible, including the introduction of a comprehensive proposal on the composite entity and beginning the process of the early appointment of a new under-secretary-general.

We also hope that during the sixty-fourth session we can achieve further substantive action in all areas of system-wide coherence.

Finally, Sir, I take this opportunity to convey to you our support and our appreciation for your great work as President of the General Assembly for the current session.

Mr. Gálvez (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): Chile aligns itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Egypt on behalf of the Joint Coordinating Committee of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 and China regarding resolution 63/311, on system-wide coherence.

Likewise, Chile should like to express its appreciation of the hard work done by the co-facilitators, the Permanent Representatives of Spain and Namibia, Ambassadors Yáñez-Barnuevo and Mbuende, and the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General, Ms. Rachel N. Mayanja. Their work has enabled us to obtain a consensus text and will allow us to continue making substantive progress during the sixty-fourth session of the Assembly. Chile would also like to thank you, Sir, for your ongoing support for this work in your role as President of the General Assembly for the current session.

As we have stated repeatedly in the informal negotiations on the gender architecture, Chile gives its decisive support to the establishment of the composite entity, with unified and visible leadership by an under-secretary-general with access to the Chief Executives Board. This would enable us to address the current fragmentation and would consolidate coordination and programming within the system. Moreover, with regard to funding, it is our position that the composite entity should be given significant financial resources. The type and level of those resources should be discussed in detail by Member States.

Three years on from the report of the High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence (A/61/583), four years on from the 2005 World Summit and its outcome (resolution 60/1), in which heads of State or Government reiterated that progress for women is progress for all, 15 years on from Beijing and 30 years on from the adoption of the Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Violence against Women, Chile reiterates its support for the guiding principles of the composite entity: proper chain of command, universal coverage, accountability and a cross-cutting approach. Likewise, we reiterate our firm support for moving forward in this and other areas of system-wide coherence during the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

Mr. Gasana (Rwanda): My delegation welcomes the adoption of resolution 63/311, entitled "System-wide coherence", and wishes to express its sincere appreciation to the Permanent Representatives of Namibia and Spain for their excellent work in facilitating the consultations on system-wide coherence.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The resolution just adopted is an important step in ensuring a more efficient and effective United Nations development system. We look forward to making swift progress on the independent evaluation process to consolidate the progress made in the delivering as one pilot countries, of which Rwanda is one. We warmly welcome the decision to establish a new gender entity and look forward to its prompt operationalization to better deliver on gender on the ground and follow the example set by my Government under the leadership of President Kagame in placing gender at the forefront of the political, social and economic agenda.

In conclusion, I should like to join others in thanking the President of the General Assembly for his stewardship of this sixty-third session and to wish him every success in all his future endeavours.

Mr. Chave (Switzerland): We should like to thank the co-chairs for having guided us through the system-wide coherence process this year and for their efforts in fostering consensus among Member States on a variety of issues of great importance for the further improvement of the effectiveness of the United Nations system.

We welcome in particular the establishment of a composite gender entity, led by an under-secretary-general, which will consolidate the four agencies working to advance the equality between men and women and women's empowerment. We look forward to moving rapidly forward at the next session on the functions and organizational arrangements of the entity. To that effect, we urge the Secretary-General to initiate without any further delay the recruitment of an under-secretary-general. This would be of great assistance in finalizing the technicalities of this entity.

The President returned to the Chair.

Switzerland is also pleased to see that progress has been made on governance, the funding of operational activities and delivering as one. We look forward to concrete decisions at the next session, in particular on the approval process for common country programmes. We remain committed to further engaging in the process in a supportive and constructive manner.

Mr. Hackett (Barbados): At the outset, my delegation would like to endorse the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Egypt on behalf of the Joint Coordinating Committee of the Non-Aligned Movement. I should also like to thank the co-facilitators for the system-wide coherence process during the sixty-third session, the Permanent Representatives of Spain and Namibia. We would like to thank them for bringing before us a draft resolution encompassing the important issue of establishing a new gender entity that has been able to achieve broad consensus. My delegation welcomes the consensus support for the establishment of the new gender entity through the consolidation of the four existing entities.

We should also like to thank the Secretary-General and his advisers, including the Deputy Secretary-General, who is here with us this afternoon, for their continuing leadership and support and for the information they have provided us at various points along the way. We would request the Secretary-General and his team to continue to provide this support, in particular in the form of information on the functions, structure and financing of the composite entity, we hope as soon as possible during the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly so that the implementation of resolution 63/311 will not be unduly delayed.

I should also like to recall that the Permanent Representative of Barbados was one of the first co-chairs of the system-wide coherence process, together with the Permanent Representative of Luxembourg. My delegation is thus particularly pleased to see that what was established some three years ago has now led to the present resolution. We certainly look forward to continuing the work on other aspects of system-wide coordination during the next session of the General Assembly.

In closing, let me take this opportunity to thank you, Sir, for the guidance you have provided on this item as well as others during your tenure as President of the General Assembly. We wish you well in your future endeavours.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote after the vote.

I should like to express my sincere thanks to Ambassador Kaire Munionganda Mbuende of Namibia and Ambassador Juan Antonio Yáñez-Barnuevo of Spain, who have conducted on my behalf the intergovernmental negotiations on system-wide coherence. I am sure that the members of the Assembly join me in extending to them our sincere appreciation.

Guided by General Assembly resolution 63/194 of 18 December 2008, entitled "Improving the coordination of efforts against trafficking in persons", the Assembly, at its sixty-third session, started considering the advisability of adopting a United Nations global plan of action against trafficking in persons. Following two thematic debates convened on this issue, at the sixty-second and sixty-third sessions of the General Assembly, several steps have been taken in that regard under the leadership of the two facilitators appointed to lead the process. In view of time constraints, the General Assembly may wish to continue this process at its sixty-fourth session.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 107?

It was so decided.

Statement by the President

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): *Tempus fugit*, the Romans used to say. And they were right: time flies. It is passing us by. It is running out for us. And as time passes us by, so do the opportunities for us to do what we must to ensure a fitting future for the coming generations.

Older persons, like me, are more aware of that reality. With one foot practically already in the grave, we seem to be more aware of the urgency not to continue to delay taking essential steps to prevent the worst possible scenarios from becoming a reality. However, in this case, I do not believe that it is simply an old man's foolishness. For the world, time is definitely running out.

If we fail to make solidarity and a sense of social and environmental responsibility the main driving force of our human society, then, quite simply, we will not survive. The egoism, individualism, greed and exclusive national interests that characterize and drive

human behaviour today can lead only to the extinction of our species. We are already heading down this path. At some point, it might not be possible to turn back.

One year ago, from this very rostrum, I shared with you, my colleagues, the vision of what I hoped to achieve during my year in the high office to which, with such trust and affection, you had elected me. Now the time has come to take stock.

I would like to begin by expressing my gratitude not only for your trust, but also for the generous cooperation afforded to me, including by many who did not disguise their concerns about my being a Catholic priest committed to the theology of liberation and to the freedom struggle of my people, led by the Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional in my homeland, Nicaragua. Fortunately, those doubts and suspicions did not prevent a frank and fraternal dialogue with those who would have been expected to oppose me most strongly. Today, as I step down, I am very happy and extremely grateful for all the generous cooperation that I received from all of you without exception.

I would like in particular to express my deep appreciation to the Secretary-General, our dear brother Ban Ki-moon, with whom I have shared strong bonds of affection and sincere friendship since the start of my time in office. I am also grateful for the generosity shown by all of our bodies and specialized agencies in preparing me for the initial briefings and in providing me with the necessary cooperation for the holding of this sixty-third session, which we are concluding today.

Of course, the successful conclusion of this sixty-third session, which I believe we can fearlessly and without exaggeration call one of the most turbulent in many years, would also have been impossible without the support and cooperation of the 27 Vice-Presidents and the excellent work of my Cabinet.

I am grateful to the entire Secretariat team — the translators, security staff and general support staff who, in addition to fulfilling their duties, offered constant prayers to the Lord that everything would turn out well for us for the benefit of the most disadvantaged of our brothers and sisters around the world. That was always true of our dear sister Altagracia Rossi, the lift attendant; or security officer Ralph Herring, who always greets us and cheers us all with a friendly smile at the delegates' entrance to the United Nations; or maintenance engineer Gregory Yanushkevich, who was always ready to shake my hand and to wish me good luck as I came in every morning. My most sincere appreciation goes to all of them and to their colleagues.

The most important months of my presidency occurred in the shadow of the current deep economic and financial crisis, which does not yet appear to have bottomed out. However, as an eighteenth-century English philosopher once said, perhaps the carping of our worst critics sounds less triumphant when we observe that, while we did not accomplish as much as we would have liked, we nevertheless accomplished a great deal.

In accordance with Article 13 of the United Nations Charter, the General Assembly shall "make recommendations for the purpose of ... promoting international cooperation in the economic, social, cultural, educational and health fields". However, for approximately the past 30 years, the Organization has been prevented from performing the role assigned to it by the Charter on the pretext that only the Bretton Woods institutions had expertise in those fields.

The work of my presidential Commission of Experts on Reforms of the International Monetary and Financial System made it clear that the General Assembly was indeed capable of bringing together specialists with sufficient expertise to discuss global financial, economic, monetary and trade governance. Furthermore, the Commission produced what is undoubtedly the most serious and complete proposal for how we should tackle the current global financial and economic crisis.

The adoption on 26 June of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and its Impact on Development, held from 24 to 30 June 2009, was a historic milestone for the United Nations. The Group of 192 was established as the most appropriate forum in which to address issues that affect the international community as a whole.

The Group of Eight (G-8) and even the Group of 20 will remain significant minorities, owing more to the fact that they are rich and powerful than to their demonstrated ability to do things well. We cannot and should not forget that, after all, it is because of their extremely grave errors and those of the Bretton Woods institutions, run by the G-8, that the world is currently experiencing what could well turn out to be the worst crisis in history.

The proposals of the Commission of Experts chaired by Joseph Stiglitz; the report of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs; obviously, the statements made by heads of State and Government at the plenary meeting of the Conference itself, such as, for example, the excellent statement by President Rafael Correa of Ecuador; and the comments made at the round tables and the working breakfasts all made very important contributions to the conclusions reached. However, we must also recognize that, without the extraordinary support and active participation of non-governmental organizations and the South Centre, headed by Martin Khor, we would not have made as much progress as we did.

The draft Outcome Document, despite the fact that it was negotiated by 192 countries and contrary to the fears expressed by some significant minorities, not only was ready two days before the Conference, but also addressed a series in depth of complex issues that went beyond the debates and documents originating in other forums.

It should also be pointed out that the Outcome Document of our historic June Conference finally initiated the process of following up the recommendations set out in the report of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization, entitled "A Fair Globalization: Creating Opportunities for All". The report states that globalization is making multilateralism both indispensable and inevitable, and that the multilateral system of the United Nations is uniquely equipped to spearhead the process of reform in economic and social policies.

The role of the United Nations in addressing the most urgent issues of our time was institutionalized with the establishment, on 31 July 2009, of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group of the General Assembly entrusted with following up on the issues set out in the Outcome Document. Those issues include reform of the Bretton Woods institutions, the same supposedly expert institutions that have reduced the implementation of Article 13 of the Charter of the United Nations to a minimum over the past three decades.

Today, the most urgent issue continues to be providing resources to the most vulnerable countries, primarily in the form of donations or, better yet, of compensation through a global fund or special drawing rights for development, in order to finance both public goods and efforts to attain the Millennium Development Goals.

It is precisely because of our inability to resolve the fundamental problems of the economic system and to put to an end the extreme poverty and inequality on which it is based that we have had to resort to palliative measures, such as the Millennium Development Goals, or to press for the urgent implementation of the concept of the responsibility to protect. However necessary the Millennium Development Goals may be, they do not meet the need for urgent and indispensable international economic reforms.

In the absence of the political will to tackle the serious injustices and inequalities afflicting the world, it is far more convenient to have recourse to the responsibility to protect to alleviate their consequences. Nevertheless, we should be satisfied that we have been able to comply with the provisions of paragraph 139 of the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document (resolution 60/1), which calls on the General Assembly to continue consideration of the responsibility to protect and its implications.

Our panel on that issue was not only balanced, but also one of the most distinguished in the history of the United Nations. Its participants included intellectuals of the calibre of Noam Chomsky, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Jean Bricmont and former Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans. The rich and comprehensive discussions clarified our understanding of this concept, which continues to be an important aspiration. However, great care must be taken to ensure that it is not interpreted or used — as it has been so often in the past — as a right to intervene.

We are at a critical juncture on the path on which we set out in San Francisco 64 years ago. The institutions established at that time have, like all institutions, experienced a natural, gradual and inevitable process of attrition. As a result, the current crisis is affecting both international economic governance and policy.

There is a broad consensus that the Security Council is incapable of effectively addressing many of the most crucial issues in the area of international peace and security and that it requires thorough reform in order to overcome the increasing limitations imposed by its restrictive methods and its narrow decision-making base. At the same time, we have taken important steps in that regard and have made progress

in the implementation of decision 62/557 of 15 September 2008.

With regard to reform of the Security Council, I believe we can say that, during the sixty-third session of the General Assembly, we have turned a dream into a reality, since we have succeeded in changing the reform process from a study by the Open-ended Working Group into the object of intergovernmental negotiations held at informal plenary meetings.

Since the negotiations began in February under the leadership of Ambassador Zahir Tanin of Afghanistan, we have held 26 meetings to consider specific issues. More than two thirds of Member States have participated actively in these meetings and detailed proposals have been submitted, which clearly demonstrates the importance that Member States attach to this issue.

In May, we made even further progress on that basis, and negotiations received further encouragement with the submission of a document outlining the main options and a series of negotiable issues. Thus, we established a robust framework for subsequent negotiations. I am convinced that there is light at the end of the tunnel. If we continue the negotiations and show greater commitment at the forthcoming session of the General Assembly, this process will soon yield concrete results.

I am grateful to Ambassador María Fernanda Espinosa of Ecuador and Ambassador Morten Wetland of Norway for their commendable work as Co-Chairs of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the General Assembly. Their efforts were a focused response to my long-standing call to prioritize the democratization of the United Nations.

Only a strong General Assembly that vigorously exercises its deliberative, policymaking and decision-making roles will be capable of enhancing multilateralism as the best option for relationships between States. It must be borne in mind that the most significant revitalization has been the capacity demonstrated by the General Assembly to address existential economic problems that it had been unable to tackle for almost three decades. Revitalization is a political rather than a technical issue.

I am also grateful to the co-chairs of the system-wide coherence process, Ambassador Juan Antonio Yáñez-Barnuevo of Spain and Ambassador Kaire Mbuende of Namibia, for the progress achieved under their able guidance. Indeed, harmonized cooperation in line with the national plans of developing countries should continue to be a key objective to ensure system-wide coherence of the United Nations through governance focused on the principles of transparency, inclusiveness and national ownership. These principles should, in turn, ensure that the forces of change are mobilized to achieve gender equality at the global level and, in due course, enhanced results at the national level.

Further efforts must therefore be resolutely pursued to secure an agreement between Member States on the need for a global institutional incentive to achieve gender equality, thereby ensuring that the women of the world have a strong and coherent voice within an effective structure.

For my part, I leave satisfied at having spared no effort to conscientiously fulfil my obligation to carry out the agenda of the sixty-third session and, at the same time, to ensure that the General Assembly remained attuned to events of international relevance not foreseen in the agenda, such as, for example, the Israeli aggression against Gaza, the global financial and economic crisis, and the recent coup d'état in Honduras, a heartening development for the pro-coup forces of the twenty-first century by which international reactionaries sought to impede the victorious and promising advance of the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas.

If we had had more time, we would have taken up as an agenda item in the General Assembly the serious threat to peace in Latin America posed by plans to build seven new United States military bases in Colombia, but, regrettably, the sixty-third session has run out of time. That item will therefore have to wait until the next session, if the work of the General Assembly remains in step with events in our world.

As has happened with the Governments of many Member States, the magnitude and gravity of the global financial and economic crisis — the greatest crisis since the foundation of the United Nations — have held centre stage in our agenda over the past year, and have in fact prevented us from considering, to the extent we should have wished, such other issues as nuclear disarmament, the situation in Palestine, decolonization and the extremely dangerous and illegal concept of preventive war, which has nothing to do

with that of "pre-emptive war", despite the fact that, regrettably, we use the same word in Spanish to refer to these two such key and critically different concepts.

We should also have liked to have considered the so-called war on terror in greater depth in our agenda. Most salient in that regard is the universally condemned case of the five Cuban heroes, unjustly and arbitrarily detained for exactly 11 years and two days, and subsequently condemned to serve heavy prison terms in the United States for having brought to light, in Miami, terrorist schemes against the heroic and ever-supportive sister Republic of Cuba. Despite the fact that the information was duly provided to the authorities of our host country, who have always claimed to have no knowledge of it, the response was to jail them. It is to be hoped that with the much-touted policy change and rectification of the new Government of the host country, there will be a correction of that miscarriage of justice, which has caused so much suffering to the five families affected and so much damage to the image of the United States that its new President is committed to improving.

My greatest frustration this year has been the situation in Palestine. The question of Palestine continues to be the most serious and prolonged unresolved political and human rights issue on the agenda of the United Nations since its inception. The evident lack of commitment to resolving it is a scandal that has caused me much sorrow.

I promised a proactive presidency, and sincerely believe that I have done everything I possibly could in this regard, explicitly requesting and attempting to persuade those who should have been most closely involved to call for the convocation of the General Assembly to consider the Palestinian situation. However, whether at the time of the three-week invasion of Gaza that began on 27 December or now, all I have received has been advice to give the process more time because things were always on the verge of being resolved and we should do nothing that could endanger the success that has always been just beyond our reach.

Faced with this situation, I sincerely did not know what to do. I have wanted to help Palestine, but those who should supposedly have been most interested have withheld their support for reasons of caution that I have been incapable of understanding. I hope that they have been right and that I have been wrong. Otherwise, we shall continue to face the ugly situation of ongoing complicity with the aggression against the rights of the noble and long-suffering Palestinian people.

A just resolution of the question of Palestine must be based on the provisions of international law and will be attained only when the unity of the Palestinian people has been achieved and the international community speaks with all its representatives who enjoy credibility and have been democratically elected. In addition to Israeli withdrawal from all territories illegally occupied since 1967, international law demands that all Palestinians displaced during the creation of the State of Israel, their children and grandchildren be permitted to return to their homeland, Palestine.

I sent my chief adviser on humanitarian affairs, Mr. Kevin Cahill, to Gaza from 17 to 22 February to prepare a report on the humanitarian situation in Gaza immediately after the aggression. Mr. Cahill's report, originally intended for release at a special session on Gaza that did not take place for the reasons I have noted, was issued on Wednesday 19 August, World Humanitarian Day, when the sacrifices of United Nations staff in conflict zones are commemorated.

I find disgraceful the passivity and apparent indifference of some very influential members of the Security Council to the fact that the blockade of Gaza has continued uninterrupted for two years in flagrant violation of international law and of a resolution of the Security Council, causing immense damage and suffering to the Palestinian population of Gaza. The situation may become even more serious if immediate measures are not taken, now that winter is approaching. It is time to demonstrate, with actions and not only words, a true commitment to the concept of the responsibility to protect.

It would not be right for me to leave without sharing what I feel to be the main lesson or perception that I have gained during this year of work, dedication and total commitment to the cause of peace through the democratization of the United Nations; the revitalization of the General Assembly; the total elimination of nuclear weapons by the year 2020, the seventy-fifth anniversary of the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki; the eradication of poverty and hunger, which this year passed the psychological barrier of a billion hungry people in the

world; measures to ensure the availability of clean water and food to all; the promotion of effective policies to tackle climate change; putting an end to the disgrace of human trafficking and to the shameful abuse of and discrimination against women; guaranteeing the right to education of children and young people, including girls and boys in situations of armed conflict or humanitarian disasters caused by natural phenomena; and guaranteeing universal access to health care, which is an ethical and religious imperative.

In all those endeavours, the ongoing counsel of Brother David Andrews of the Congregation of the Holy Cross, and of Maude Barlow, Mohammed Bedjaoui, Byron Blake, Leonardo Boff, Noam Chomsky, Ramsey Clark, Michael Clark, Kevin Cahill, Aldo Diaz Lacayo, François Houtart, Michael Kennedy, Francisco Lacayo Parajón, Carlos Emilio López, Paul Oquist, Nuripan Sen, Joseph Stiglitz and Oscar-René Vargas was of great use to this presidency, which we intended to be a team effort from the beginning. However, clearly, our greatest gratitude should be to God, our Lord, for having allowed us to contribute something to the cause of world peace.

There was much talk this year of the need to reform the United Nations and to do everything possible to improve its image, credibility and effectiveness. According to data of the most recent poll of the Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project, carried out in 24 nations and the Palestinian territories, there has been a noticeable improvement in how the United Nations is perceived. That pleases us, but is not enough. Much remains to be done if the United Nations is to become worthy of the prestige, trust and credibility that it needs to effectively carry out its very important mission in today's sorely troubled world.

It is said that the League of Nations failed because those who sponsored it did not have the power or will needed to make it a reality. I believe that something similar can be said of the United Nations. I am among those who believe that the United Nations is potentially an indispensable Organization to help humanity survive all the crises converging to threaten its extinction. The main problem, without doubt, is that not all its founders really believed, or believe even today, in the vision or principles explicit and implicit in its founding Charter.

I believe that it is not far-fetched to note what the whole world knows, which is the fact that, among many other truths, some of our most powerful and influential Member States do not believe wholeheartedly in the rule of law in international relations, preferring to believe that compliance with the legal norms to which we formally committed in signing the Charter is something that applies only to weak countries. With such a low level of commitment, it should not surprise us that the United Nations has been unable to achieve the main objectives for which it was created.

Certain Member States feel that they can act according to the law of the jungle and defend the right of the strongest to do whatever they like with complete and absolute impunity, without being accountable to anyone. Moreover, they think it right to rail against multilateralism and proclaim the virtues of unilateralism, while simultaneously pontificating unashamedly from their privileged seats on the Security Council about the need for Member States conscientiously to fulfil their obligations under the Charter or to be sanctioned, selectively of course, for not doing so. The sovereign equality of all Member States and the obligation to prevent wars are, for them, small details that need not be taken very seriously.

All these and many other equally serious anomalies have led many to believe in the urgent need to reform the United Nations, but during this year as President of the General Assembly, I have come to the conclusion that our Organization is already beyond reforming or repairing. What we need to do is to reinvent it, and we need to do so urgently for the greater glory of God and the common good of the Earth and of humanity.

In the 64 years since the United Nations was created, many scientific advances and developments in the ethical consciousness of humankind now allow us to identify the main elements of another possible world, one that is indispensable for our survival, and to proceed on that basis to the drafting of a proposed declaration on the common good of the Earth and humanity. Once the required consensus of Member States has been obtained on this declaration, we will have to convert that shared vision into a draft for a new Charter of the United Nations, one that is attuned to the needs and knowledge of the twenty-first century.

Our dear brother Evo Morales Ayma, President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, and our brother and liberation theologian Leonardo Boff have helped us understand, in a more comprehensive and holistic

form, man's place in creation and his relation to Mother Earth. We understand that the Earth and humanity are part of a vast evolving universe, sharing the same destiny and threatened by destruction as a result of the irresponsibility and recklessness of human beings.

We now understand that ties exist linking all living beings because we all carry the same basic genetic code that underlies the sacred unity of life in all its many forms. We are more clearly aware that all human beings, with their cultures, traditions, religions, arts and visions of the world, are members of a single family of brothers and sisters with equal dignity and equal rights. We are impelled towards a new culture — a culture of cooperation that will replace the culture of competition. Our goal should be living well, not living better. That means living in harmony with the cycles of Mother Earth and of the cosmos, and in balance with all that exists.

We now know, or perhaps I should say are more aware than ever that Mother Nature provides us with everything necessary for life, and that natural life, including human life, depends on a healthy biosphere, capable of maintaining and preserving water, forests, animals and innumerable microorganisms. But we are also more aware than ever of the precarious situation of human life and capacity of the Earth to support life.

Human beings, who have become the principal predators of nature and the greatest enemies of life, have begun a process that is hurtling us towards disaster at great speed. It is the primary cause of climate change, which is without a doubt the most serious and urgent of all the multiple and converging crises that currently threaten the human species with extinction. To be effective, our response to climate change must be immediate and forceful. In terms of economic resources, at least 1 per cent of the gross domestic product of the entire world will be required. The major culprits will have to bear the costs in proportion to their responsibility for the problem.

All of this knowledge and awareness of the real and serious threats to life must have practical consequences for our behaviour and our conduct with respect to the common good of the Earth and humanity. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is, to date, the most we have been able jointly to achieve here at the United Nations. Obviously, however, if the Declaration is to have an effect, it must be put into practice, conscientiously respected throughout the world, and continue to be updated as human consciousness becomes more sensitive and discovers rights hitherto unrecognized as such.

Nevertheless, it is no longer enough to speak only of human rights. The knowledge afforded us by science obliges us to adopt a more holistic and integral vision, because we know that we are, together with the Earth and nature, an indivisible whole. As I have already said, we must adopt a universal declaration of the common good of the Earth and humanity as the first indispensable step in reinventing the United Nations. It must be recalled that we must either behave as we should, serving Mother Earth instead of having her serve us, and mutually loving and serving one another, or we will all perish. That is the simple truth. *Tempus fugit*. Time is running away from us; it is running out. In Copenhagen, we will have the opportunity to show that we understand well what that means and that we are determined to do what is needed to defend life.

Mr. Salsabili (Islamic Republic of Iran): I take the floor today to express our deep appreciation for the great privilege of having you, Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, with us as the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session.

We are thankful to you for your resolve to relieve people from poverty, hunger and disease, and yet that is not all. We are indebted to you for your independence, courage and persistence in pursuing peace, solidarity and justice on many occasions, and particularly with respect to the Palestinian cause, and yet that is not enough. We are grateful to you for your determination and objectivity in addressing the financial crisis and many other key issues, and yet this assessment is not complete.

Going through the long list of your valuable contributions and excellent initiatives would consume the entire day; thus, suffice it to say that you have contributed greatly to the work of the General Assembly and promoted its important role. Allow me once again to congratulate and thank you for your patience, dedication and compassion, and for the sacrifices you have made in fulfilling this important responsibility and leading this lofty body of the United Nations.

Mr. Asl'arov (Uzbekistan): I should like to express our sincere appreciation to you, Mr. President, for your exceptional and exemplary leadership of the

sixty-third session of the General Assembly. Over the past year, under your leadership, the General Assembly has achieved substantial progress in addressing the most important issues facing human civilization today.

The General Assembly addressed the most urgent issues of international security, threats to global stability and challenges to sustainable development in a timely, adequate and responsible manner. I would like to highlight in particular the very important Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and Its Impact on Development, held in the General Assembly on your initiative and under your personal leadership in June. Indeed, we have already started to feel the positive effects of that Conference in the form of solid and comprehensive analyses and reports from leading authorities and experts in international economics which bear the imprints of our deliberations of a few months ago.

Conservative economic policies and socially oriented Government spending on health care, education, job creation, effective and innovative agricultural and industrial policies and other measures for establishing sustainable economic growth, as those adopted in Uzbekistan and many other countries, have taken on new meaning and dimensions in view of the consequences of ongoing global financial crisis. We may safely expect that there is more to come. Developing countries in particular are very grateful to you, Mr. President, for your thoughtful responses to their requests and concerns and your strategic vision in addressing them.

Once again, I should like, on behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Uzbekistan, to thank you for your dedication to human causes and justice and for the exceptional leadership you have displayed throughout the year.

Mrs. Viotti (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the close of this session of the General Assembly, I should like, Sir, to express our sincere and fraternal thanks for your significant work at the head of this organ. Your leadership and determination have left an indelible mark on our work.

The United Nations and its Charter are based on the permanent tension between reality and utopia, between the world as it is and the world as it should be. As President, you have constantly reminded us of the moral imperative to work tirelessly towards the ideal. You challenged us to see the work of this Organization not as an end in itself, but as an effective instrument for building peace, justice and sustainable development, as a means of genuinely bettering the lives of those millions of individuals for whom the United Nations represents the hope of a better future.

Your presidency has revitalized the Assembly by setting before it the most relevant and urgent matters currently on the international agenda. Your actions were based on the conviction, shared by Brazil, that the universal character of the General Assembly bestows upon it a unique role within the community of nations.

I should like to wish you every personal happiness and great success in the endeavours for the common good that I am sure that you will undertake in the future.

Mr. Davide (Philippines): I requested the floor, Mr. President, in order to add the voice of my delegation to the chorus of commendations articulated by my colleagues in acknowledging the exemplary leadership you have provided during the sixty-third session of the General Assembly.

The outcomes of the various activities you have initiated and engaged in during your stewardship have raised the bar for the conduct of the affairs of this multilateral Organization. You acquitted yourself with honour of the solemn task with which the President of the General Assembly is burdened. We have, more than that, witnessed your determination, endurance and wisdom.

You have been able to conclude your stewardship with a resounding success, with the same vision and mission with which you embarked upon it, as recorded in both your acceptance address of 4 July 2008 and your statement at the opening of the sixty-third session on 16 September 2008. In your acceptance address you said,

> "The United Nations still has a lot to contribute to the world. However, in order to do so effectively, it must be precisely what its name implies: an organization of united nations, not an organization of nations in disarray, much less one of subjugated nations. Unity based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all its Members is currently the greatest demand placed on the Organization — unity in the struggle to democratize the United Nations". (*A/62/PV.99, p. 2*)

You continued, "The unity that the world requires of us is born of love and a desire to transform each of us into instruments of peace, justice and solidarity" (*Ibid., p. 3*). And you went on,

> "In addition to paying priority attention to the fight to eliminate hunger and poverty from the world and to democratize the United Nations, we will pay very special attention to such issues as climate change, the energy crisis, terrorism, human rights, disarmament and nuclear control, the rights of women and children and the preservation of biodiversity and cultural diversity". (*Ibid., p. 4*)

In your statement at the opening of the sixty-third session, you reiterated your mission and declared that the "central and overarching objective of the sixty-third session of the General Assembly will be to democratize the United Nations" (*A/63/PV.1, p. 2*). You stressed the imperative of dealing with the root causes that limit the institutional capacity of the General Assembly. You expanded on the issues which you took up in your acceptance statement. You ended with what you consider the watchword of the day: change, real and credible.

We have witnessed several crises of global impact, and you have taken them on with brave, decisive and timely responses, crafting strategies for global solutions. The ultimate result of these crises, including climate change and the global food and financial crises, was their adverse effect on all peoples. You have provided a voice for the marginalized sectors of our respective societies. As to democratization: we have made progress, and we hope to continue.

We cannot but commend and praise you, Mr. President. We need more of your prayers. *Tempus fugit*, but there is always time for prayer.

Mrs. Navarro Barro (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the Cuban delegation, I should like at the outset to express our deepest gratitude for the brilliant leadership that you have shown during the sixty-third session of the General Assembly. You have drawn attention to the principal ills affecting our world. You have issued a clear call for us to leave aside banal excuses for failing to stop millions of people from dying from hunger, failing to protect the environment and letting arms continue to dictate the rhythm of our lives.

We thank you, in particular, for the clear and explicit reference you made to the fight against terrorism. Like you, we would like to reaffirm our country's steadfast commitment to fighting terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

I would like in particular to thank you, Mr. President, for reminding the General Assembly of the fate of the five Cuban anti-terrorism warriors who are unjustly imprisoned in United States jails. As you are aware, that is an issue of the utmost importance and sensitivity for the Cuban people. It is also one that Cuba has raised at the United Nations and that you, Sir, have highlighted during several of your statements. We are therefore deeply grateful for your words.

We would like to wish you, Mr. President, all the best for the future. We hope that you will be back here very soon. On behalf of Cuba, many thanks to you, Father Miguel.

The President: Before the Assembly observes a minute of silent prayer or meditation, I would like to remind members that, tomorrow, Tuesday, 15 September, is the International Day of Democracy. I would encourage all Member States to commemorate the Day by remembering our commitment to promote and consolidate real democracy worldwide.

Agenda item 2 (*continued*)

Minute of silent prayer or meditation

The President: We are now coming to the end of the sixty-third regular session of the General Assembly. May I invite representatives to stand and observe one minute of silent prayer or meditation.

The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silent prayer or meditation.

Closure of the sixty-third session

The President: Before proceeding further, I should like to invite to the podium the President-elect for the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly, His Excellency Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki, so that I may hand over the gavel to him.

I declare closed the sixty-third session of the General Assembly.

The meeting rose at 6.45 p.m.